

our amendment acknowledges that staying the course is a strategy that shows no promise of success, and it is time to change that strategy.

There remains a thunderstorm of conflicting forces over much of Iraq. Questing for dominance are al-Qaida, nationalistic Baathists left over from the days of Saddam's tyranny, and an array of rival religious armies.

The battle lines are as uncertain and diverse as are the competing objectives of the various combatants. True, there have been some other positive developments. Iraq finally put a constitutional government in place last month, 5 months after the December 15 election.

After extensive deliberation and debate, the Iraqi Government is finally functioning, but much work remains to be done by the Iraqi people and their elected leaders, for only they can ultimately defeat the forces that have left the Iraqi nation on the brink of civil war. There are now over 260,000 Iraqi military and police personnel who have been trained and equipped, well over three-quarters of the way to reaching the Pentagon's stated goal of establishing an Iraqi force of 325,000 troops. Of the 102 operational Iraqi Army combat battalions, 69 are either in the lead or operating independently. That is over 60,000 soldiers.

Now that Iraqis have assumed the reins of control, it is critical that the United States not be caught in the middle of the ongoing carnage, sectarian violence, and civil strife.

I believe strongly that our mission in Iraq needs to change—train police and military, provide necessary infrastructure assistance, advise when asked—but now that the entire Iraqi leadership is in place, it is time for the phased redeployment promised last year in this bill to begin.

Our amendment calls on the administration to prepare and present to Congress and the American people by the end of this year a plan outlining the steps needed to proceed with the redeployment of our troops, either back to the United States or to other critical areas of potential terrorist conflict around the globe.

This amendment would place the Senate on record asking that the President expedite the transition of U.S. forces in Iraq to a limited presence and confine the mission to training and providing logistical support to Iraqi security forces.

We request the President to begin the phased redeployment of forces this year. It would ask that the President submit a plan to the Congress by the end of 2006 with estimated—estimated—days for the continued phased redeployment of U.S. forces from Iraq. Is this too much to ask 3 years and 3 months into the most costly conflict the United States has yet entered into?

It would also ask the President to convene an international conference to bring together the international community to discuss and implement a strategy to assisting Iraq's development and infrastructure.

This amendment also calls on the Iraqi Government to, one, achieve a broad-based and sustainable political settlement within its own groups of people; two, share political power and economic resources among all Iraqi groups; three, develop a unifying constitution; and, four, disarm the militias and remove members of the Iraqi security forces whose loyalty to the new government is in doubt.

Moreover, and most importantly, it is increasingly clear that the Iraqis themselves wish to see a structured downsizing of American troops in their country. Why don't we listen?

Senator CLINTON eloquently pointed this out, and it bears repeating. The new Iraqi National Security Adviser first said a week ago, and then more recently in a Washington Post op-ed just yesterday, that the Iraqi Government hopes that by year's end, United States troop levels will be under 100,000, and that most of the remaining troops will return home by the end of 2007.

We don't make accusations of the Iraqi National Security Adviser. I have a hard time understanding why the opposite side makes accusations of us when we simply say we agree with the Iraqis, whose business it is to know this, chart this, advise this, and carry this out.

He states unequivocally that Iraq's ambition is to have full control of his country by the end of 2008. He says: The removal of coalition troops from Iraqi streets will help the Iraqis, who now see our troops as occupiers rather than the liberators they were meant to be.

Members, this is the Iraqi National Security Adviser saying that the Iraqi people now see our troops as occupiers rather than the liberators they were once meant to be. This is a point worthy of serious consideration by this body.

Al-Rubaie goes on to suggest that such a drawdown: "Will legitimize Iraq's government in the eyes of its people" and "strengthen it to last the full 4 years it is supposed to." A drawdown, he says, will legitimize Iraq's Government in the eyes of its people and strengthen it to last the 4 years it is supposed to. Why don't we listen?

And he concludes yesterday's op-ed by stating—and I find this eloquent:

Iraq has to grow out of the shadow of the United States and the coalition, take responsibility for its own decisions, learn from its own mistakes, and find Iraqi solutions to Iraqi problems, with the knowledge that our friends and allies are standing by with support and help should we need it.

This is exactly what this legislation would do. If the Iraqi National Security Adviser is willing to put forward goals and timetables for the downsizing of the American troop presence in Iraq, why shouldn't the President of the United States?

I hope this body will join together in a bipartisan fashion, as we did last year, and call for the redeployment and transition of the United States mission

in Iraq beginning this year. Three years and 3 months. This hasn't been 30 days, it hasn't been 60 days or 90 days. It has been 3 years and 3 months with "stay the course," and things get worse and worse. Now we have the National Security Adviser in Iraq saying essentially exactly what the amendment before us today says. Are we going to listen to him or do we think we know better?

I believe this is the right thing to do for our troops who have sacrificed so much. It is the right thing to do for their families who wait anxiously for them to return home. It is the right thing to do for the overwhelming majority of the American people who have stated clearly their desire for a change of course in Iraq.

I believe it is the right thing to do for the Iraqi people. They are prepared to stand up. They are prepared to handle their own destiny. I believe Iraq should be for Iraqis.

Thank you, and I yield the floor.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I yield myself just a minute or two. I listened carefully, as I do to all the comments made by my colleagues, and I believe I heard my distinguished colleague from California say that the most costly war ever is the one we are engaged in.

I would like to remind my colleague and all those listening and all in America—we deeply grieve the 2,500 lives we have lost thus far and the 18,000 wounded—but I remember so well when I was but 17 or just turned 18. I was in the Navy during the last battle of World War II; just one of those battles in World War II. I was in the training command at that time awaiting my orders to go to the Pacific. It began on Easter Sunday morning, and it ended 81 days later. One battle, 81 days, in 1945. Let me tell my colleague what America suffered. Twelve thousand men, and I expect some women, were killed or missing and never accounted for; 38,000 were wounded, 763 aircraft were lost, 368 U.S. naval ships either sunk or were severely damaged.

We have to be cautious and put this conflict in context with the sacrifices that Americans have made. That was just one battle in World War II. The casualties eventually went over a half a million. That was only one battle.

As we look at this conflict, yes, we grieve the losses, but we have to maintain this steadfast commitment, as we did in World War II, to put an end to this tyranny of terrorism. If not, we will not see casualties like Okinawa in any military conflict in the years to come between soldiers, sailors, airmen, and their counterparts, but we could see those casualties here at home if these terrorists acquire weapons of mass destruction or are given places in the world to have their training camps, and if they perceive that this Nation is in any way wavering its commitment to fight terrorism in every aspect we can.

So I would say to my dear colleague, I don't think this is the most costly